

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

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EXDIS

DEPARTMENT PLEASE PASS TO:

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

CINCUSAFE

USNMR SHAPE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MARR PFOR GR US

SUBJECT: U.S.-GREEK DEFENSE COOPERATION: MEETING WITH
DEFENSE MINISTER AVEROFF

REF: ATHENS 4048

1. AT AVEROFF'S SUGGESTION I MET WITH HIM LAST NIGHT OVER
A DRINK RATHER THAN THIS MORNING (REFTEL). I TOLD HIM THAT
WE WERE SERIOUSLY DISTURBED BY A SERIES OF EVENTS JUST BEFORE
AND JUST AFTER THE GREEK EASTER HOLIDAYS WHICH MADE US WONDER
WHETHER THE SPIRIT OF COOPERATION IN MUTUAL DEFENSE MATTERS
WHICH WAS REFLECTED IN THE GREEK-U.S. FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT
CONCLUDED IN WASHINGTON ON APRIL 16 WAS GOING TO BE APPLIED
BY THE GREEK GOVERNMENT TO OUR DAY-TO-DAY RELATIONS OR WOULD
REMAIN A DEAD LETTER. I CITED IN THIS CONNECTION THE HAF
REJECTION OF OUR REQUEST FOR A DIVERT ALERT AT SOUDA, THE
DEFENSE MINISTRY'S REJECTION OF OUR REQUEST TO USE SOUDA BAY
AS AN ANCHORAGE FOR AMPHIBIOUS SQUADRON UNITS OF THE SIXTH
FLEET, AND, MORE RECENTLY, DELAYS ENCOUNTERED BY THE EMBASSY

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IN THE SECOND STAFF OFFICE OF THE HELLENIC NAVY WHEN WE SOUGHT

TO BRING THE RALEIGH INTO HELLENIC SHIPYARDS FOR EMERGENCY REPAIRS. THESE EPISODES WERE, IT SEEMD TO ME, A SORRY RECORD OF NON-COOPERATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE FRANEWORK AGREEMENT AND PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS' SUBSEQUENT DEFENSE OF U.S.-GREEK DEFENSE RELATIONS IN PARLIAMENT. I COULD NOT HELP NOTING THAT THIS UNFORTHCOMING ATTITUDE ON THE PART OF THE GREEK GOVERNMENT WAS IN SHARP CONTRACT TO TREATMENT ACCORDED THE SOVIET NAVY WHICH DURING THE PAST WEEK HAD BROUGHT TWO AGS'S INTO PIRAEUS WITHOUT APPARENT DIFFICULTY.

2. AVEROFF PROTESTED THAT WE WERE MISINTERPRETING THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE INCIDENTS I HAD MENTIONED. THE GREEK GOVERNMENT UNDERSTOOD AND WELCOMED THE POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS OF THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT AND INTENDED TO APPLY THEM. AVEROFF DISMISSED THE ALERT DIVERT PROBLEM BY SAYING THAT THE LATENESS OF OUR REQUEST COMBINED WITH THE ONSET OF THE ORTHODOX EASTER TO MAKE THE REQUEST IMPOSSIBLE TO FULFILL. HE FIRMLY DENIED THAT THERE WERE ANY POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS INVOLVED. IN THE CASE OF THE SOUDA BAY ANCHORAGE HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT POLITICAL FACTORS WERE INVOLVED BUT SAID THAT HE AND ADMIRAL MOURIKIS HAD ASSUMED THAT OUR NEEDS WOULD BE MET BY THE SITIA ANCHORAGE. WHEN I SAID THAT SITIA WAS A LESS SATISFACTORY ANCHORAGE THAN SOUDA FROM EVERY STANDPOINT, AVEROFF SAID WITH APPARENT SINCERITY THAT HE HAD NOT FULLY REALIZED THIS. "MY CONCERN AND THAT OF MOURIKIS," HE SAID, " WAS THAT THE APPEARANCE OF SIX OR SEVEN U.S. FLEET UNITS AT SOUDA IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE CONCLUSION OF THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT BUT BEFORE THE CONCLUSION OF A FINAL AGREEMENT WOULD HAVE LED TO STRONG POLITICAL ATTACKS DAMAGING TO OUR MUTUAL INTERESTS." REGARDING THE RALEIGH, AVEROFF SAID THAT HE WAS COMPLETELY UNAWARE OF THE DELAYS WE HAD ENCOUNTERED AND WOULD SEE THAT THIS DID NOT HAPPEN AGAIN.

3. I TOLD AVEROFF THAT I WAS HAPPY TO LEARN FROM HIM THAT THE EPISODES I HAD RAISED DID NOT REFLECT A CONSCIOU DECISION BY THE GREEK GOVERNMENT TO DEFER APPLICATION OF THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT. WITH NEGOTIATIONS SCHEDULED TO RESUME NEXT WEEK ON U.S. FACILITIES IN GREECE, AND IN VIEW OF THE LIKELIHOOD THAT RESULTS WOULD GREATLY ENHANCE GREECE'S DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY, IT WAS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT FOR THE GREEK

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GOVERNMENT TO RESUME CONCURRENTLY A NORMAL PATTERN OF DEFENSE COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES. WE WERE, FOR EXAMPLE, LOOKING FORWARD TO INCREASED PORT VISITS AND PROMPT RELAXATION OF OPERATING RESTRICTUIONS AT SOUDA BAY AIRFIELD.

4. AVEROFF SIAD THAT WHILE IT WAS NECESSARY TO MOVE PRUDENTLY TOWARD FULL RESUMPTION OF OUR COOPERATIVE ACTIVITIES AND NOT RISK POLITICAL SETBACKS, WE COULD BE SURE THAT THE GREEK GOVERNMENT

WAS SEEKING THE SAME OBJECTIVE. WITH RESPECT TO SOUDA AB HE BELIEVED IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO BEGIN INCREASING OUR LEVEL OF ACTIVITY NEXT WEEK. I TOLD HIM THAT THIS WOULD BE AN EXTREMELY WELCOM DEVELOPMENT AND A REASSURING INDICATION THAT THE GREEK GOVERNMENT WAS IN FACT PUTTING INTO PRACTICE THE PRINCIPLES OF THE FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT. WE AGREED THAT GENERAL BURKE WOULD SEE HAF COMMANDER ECONOMOU NEXT WEEK TO DISCUSS SPECIFICS.

5. COMMENT: THIS WAS A GENERALLY ENCOURAGING EXCHANGE AND WHEN TAKEN TOGETHER WITH THE COMMENTS OF BITSIOS AND CALOGERAS (REFTEL) LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THAT OUR RECENT PROBLEMS WERE CAUSED MORE BY BUREAUCRATIC DELAYS AND TIMIDITY IN THE HELLENIC NAVY, PLUS THE USUAL DIFFICULTIES OF DOING BUSINESS WITH THE GREEK GOVERNMENT DURING THE EASTER SEASON, THAN BY DECISIONS AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL. WE SHALL IN ANY EVENT BE FOLLOWING UP VIGOUROUSLY. STEARNS

NOTE BY OC/T: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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